

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 02832 261332Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-07 AGRE-00 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00

STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 IO-13 COME-00 FRB-03 XMB-02

OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 /108 W

-----261337Z 126817 /45

P 252020Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 678

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USSOUTHCOM

AMCONSULATE CALI

AMCONSULATE BARRANQUILLA

AMCONSULATE MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ECON, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ VOICED HIS SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WHILE WARNING THE U.S. AGAINST ENCOURAGING A DECREASE IN COFFEE PRICES. CONSERVATIVE PARTY IN-FIGHTING CONTINUED WITH ON FACTION DEFENDING THE PRESIDENT FROM ALLEGEDLY UNFAIR PERSONAL ATTACKS, WHICH NOW INCLUDE AN ALLEGATION OF IMPROPRIETY AGAINST ANOTHER OF THE PRESIDENT'S SONS. A SEPARATIST MOVEMENT WAS FORMED ON SAN ANDRES ISLAND. THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING A STUDY OF ECONOMIC CONCENTRATION IN PREPARATION FOR THE SUBMISSION OF ANTI- MONOPOLY LEGISLATION. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT LOPEZ COMMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, U.S. MILITARY AID, AND COFFEE BOYCOTT. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE
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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 02832 261332Z

DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO COSTA RICA (BOGOTA 2597), SUPPORTED THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL ENTITY, WHILE STATING COLOMBIA'S OPPOSITION TO INTERNATIONAL ENTITY, WHILE STATING COLOMBIA'S OPPOSITION TO INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SOVEREIGN STATES. REGARDING THE LINKAGE BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND U.S. MILITARY AID TO COLOMBIA, LOPEZ NOTED, "SINCE WE RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, THE ISSUE DISAPPEARS."

THE PRESIDENT WENT ON TO WARN OF THE DANGERS WHICH A BOYCOTT, SUCH AS THAT PROPOSED IN THE U.S., COULD PRESENT TO THE STABILITY OF DEMOCRATIC COFFEE-PRODUCING NATIONS IF COFFEE PRICES WERE SUDDENLY TO SUFFER A STEEP DROP. DESPITE LOPEZ' CLARIFICATION TO OUR CHARGE IN SAN JOSE (SAN JOSE 1162), THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WERE CARRIED IN COLOMBIAN NEWS MEDIA AS A STIFF WARNING TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THAT ENCOURAGING A DECREASE IN PRICE COULD LEAD TO A "FIRE AT ITS DOORSTEP."

3. SPECIAL SESSION EXTENDED AS POLITICAL BATTLES HINDER PROGRESS. THE GOC ANNOUNCED MARCH 23 THAT THE ONE-MONTH SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS, DUE TO END MARCH 24, HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO APRIL 22 IN ORDER TO GIVE CONGRESS MORE TIME TO CONSIDER THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED LEGISLATION. WORK IN THE SPECIAL SESSION HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY POLITICAL IN-FIGHTING WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES, AND BY ABSENTEEISM. THIS WEEK'S SESSION WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF VERBAL BATTLES BETWEEN THE TWO BRANCHES OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, DURING WHICH THE ALVARO GOMEZ WING CHARGED THE OSPINA-PASTRANA FACTION WITH BEING TOO VOCAL IN ITS OPPOSITION TO THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT, AND TOO PERSONAL IN ITS ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT (SEE FOLLOWING ARTICLE). THE OSPINA-PASTRANA WING COUNTERED THAT THEIR DUTY IS TO OPPOSE, ESPECIALLY THE ALLEGED DOUBLE MORAL STANDARDS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. MEANWHILE, THE TURBAYISTA PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS' THIRD COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THAT ALL PARLIMENTARIANS INEXCUSABLY ABSENT FROM CONGRESSIONAL SESSIONS WILL BE REPORTED AND THEIR SALARIES APPROPRIATELY REDUCED, CLAIMING THAT ABSENTEEISM HAS SERIOUSLY HINDERED THE WORK OF THIS SPECIAL SESSION. INTERESTINGLY, THE NAMES THUS FAR SUBMITTED FOR PAY REDUCTIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BOGOTA 02832 261332Z

APPEAR TO BE THOSE OF ANTI-TURBAY CONGRESSMEN.

4. PRESIDENT'S SONS REMAIN AS FOCAL POINTS OF SCANDAL. THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING CHARGES SURROUNDING THE ACQUISITION OF A LARGE RANCH BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ' SON, JUAN MANUEL, AND THE CONSTRUCTION TO IT OF A ROAD (BOGOTA 2102), HAS COMPLETED ITS WORK AND IS NOW WRITING AN OFFICIAL REPORT WHICH APPARENTLY EXONERATES THE PRESIDENT AND HIS SON FROM ANY WRONG-DOING. THE REPORT IS BEING ATTACKED BY OPPOSITIONIST FORCES WHO CHARGE THAT THE INVESTIGATION WAS SUPERFICIAL IN NATURE AND BIASED IN FAVOR OF THE PRESIDENT. NOW ADDED TO THE CONTINUED PUBLIC AIRING OF THIS MATTER IS THE NEW CHARGE THAT ANOTHER OF THE PRESIDENT'S SONS, FELIPE, HAS CONTRACTED WITH THE NATIONAL COFFEE GROWERS FEDERATION TO DO A STUDY OF FUTURE COFFEE MARKETS FOR A HANDSOME FEE WHILE ALSO WORKING AS THE PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE SECRETARY. THE OSPINA-PASTRANA WING OF THE CONSERVATING PARTY, WHOSE MAGAZINE GUION FIRST REVEALED THIS CONTRACT, IS CITING THIS AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE SCANDALS SURROUNDING PRESIDENT LOPEZ.

5. INITIATION OF SAN ANDRES SEPARATIST MOVEMENT. SEVERAL INDIGENOUS LEADERS OF COLOMBIA'S SAN ANDRES ISLAND ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 23 THAT THEY ARE FORMING A SEPARATIST MOVEMENT. INHABITANTS OF THE SMALL CARIBBEAN ISLAND HAVE LONG COMPLAINED OF NEGLECT BY COLOMBIA AND A SPOKESMAN FOR THE NEW SEPARATIST ORGANIZATION SAID HIS PEOPLE SHOULD SEEK HELP FROM NICARAGUA IN SOLVING THEIR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. IN THE PAST, GOC FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED PRIVATELY TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THEIR CONCERN OVER ALLEGED JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGEMENT OF SEPARATIST TENDENCIES ON THE ISLANDS OF SAN ANDRES AND PROVIDENCIA.

6. ANTI-MONOPOLY BILL -- AGAIN. IN AN APPEARANCE BEFORE THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES THIS WEEK, MINISTER OF FINANCE ESPINOSA ANNOUNCED THAT A GOVERNMENT COMMISSION WAS UNDERTAKING A DETAILED STUDY OF THE CONCENTRATION OF ECONOMIC POWER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BOGOTA 02832 261332Z

IN ORDER TO DECIDE HOW BEST TO PROCEED WITH ANTI-MONOPOLY LEGISLATION. DESCRIBING MONOPOLIES AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, ESPINOSA SAID THAT THE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE COULD TAKE THE FORM OF AMENDMENTS TO THE PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS LAST YEAR BY RODRIGO BOTERO (BUT NEVER PASSED) OR COMPLEMENTARY LEGISLATION. SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Executive Order: N/A
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